



National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

Preparedness Strategy

Fire Season 2005

Strategic Direction to Optimize Firefighting Capability

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The National Preparedness Strategy Plan was finalized on May 31, 2005. The Preparedness Strategy will be updated as the season progresses and as fire activity warrants. Preparedness Strategy updates will be numbered and dated as they are added to this document.

Introduction

The National Multi-Agency Coordination (NMAC) group consists of one representative from the following agencies: Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Forest Service (FS), National Association of State Foresters (NASF), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency – United States Fire Administration (FEMA-USFA), who have been delegated authority by their respective agency directors to manage wildland fire operations on a national scale when fire management resource shortages are probable. The delegated authorities include:

- Provide oversight of general business practices between the National Multi-Agency Coordination (NMAC) group and the Geographic Area Multi-Agency Coordination (GMAC) groups.
- Establish priorities among geographic areas.
- Direct, control, allocate and reallocate resources among or between geographic areas to meet NMAC priorities.
- Implement decisions of the NMAC.

This strategic direction optimizes firefighting capabilities as the tempo and severity of the season escalates. Likely scenarios include:

- Multiple large wildland fires burning in several geographic areas simultaneously.
- Demand for firefighting resources remains high.
- As season progresses, fires take hold in “long interval” fire regimes where resistance to control will become more difficult.
- Contingency resources (military, National Guard, foreign specialists) are engaged.
- High social/political anxiety as efforts move from offensive-oriented strategies to defensive-oriented strategies.
- Fireline supervision and command oversight will be limiting factors in determining, safe effective span-of-control.
- Resources are requested and/or committed to National Response Plan Taskings.

The Federal Fire and Aviation Operations Action Plan defines operational expectations, reinforces performance, and clarifies existing policies and procedures. It provides for consistent implementation of policy by Agency Administrators, Incident/Area Command Teams, and fire and aviation management personnel (Refer to Appendix 1).

Preparedness Plans direct activity for responding to increasingly severe situations (Refer to Appendix 2). The NMAC and Geographic Area MAC Groups (GMAC) will coordinate closely to assess the situation and needs. These groups work with operational entities such as incident management teams, local law enforcement, local fire service and state departments of emergency management to implement action (Refer to Appendix 3 for a summary of the basic roles and responsibilities of these entities). The NMAC will issue direction based on:

- **Predictive models:** Using Predictive Services to provide general prognosis of upcoming fire activity, and a more specific, state-by-state evaluation to anticipate critical fire situations.
- **Prioritization Criteria:** An overall strategy that guides decision-making in setting national priorities for wildland fire management agencies.
- **Strategic Points:** A set of strategic perspectives on national emphasis areas in risk mitigation, assessment of people and equipment capability, fire complexity, and innovative ideas to mitigate problem areas.

National Priorities

The National Response Plan (NRP) outlines the important homeland security mission of preventing terrorist attacks within the United States; reducing the vulnerability to all natural and human hazards; and minimizing the damage and assisting in the recovery from any type of incident that occurs.

Within this overall mission, the primary responsibility of the wildland fire agencies is the response to wildland fire. When competition for the use of wildland fire resources occurs among Geographic areas, the NMAC will establish national priorities.

The single overriding priority is the protection of human life – both that of our firefighters and of the public.

In setting national priorities, the NMAC will consider all of the following criteria, which are not listed in any priority order.

- Maintaining Geographic Area initial action capability
- Protecting communities and community infrastructure, other property and improvements, and natural and cultural resources
- Limiting costs without compromising safety and
- Meeting local agency suppression objectives

National Strategy

The outlook for the 2005 fire season shows above normal fire potential in portions of the Pacific Northwest and Northern Rockies, along with the lower elevations of the Great Basin and Southwest. Below normal potential is anticipated in the mountainous areas of the Southwest and southern California. By closely monitoring and projecting the fire season, we will effectively and safely manage resources to meet national priorities (Refer to Appendix 4).

The current national outlook is located at:

http://www.nifc.gov/news/intell_predserv_forms/season_outlook.html

Safety is clearly tied to managing risk. The NMAC is emphasizing a constant re-examination of factors involved in limiting exposure to dangerous situations, monitoring people and equipment for fatigue, and utilizing our best skills on high priority incidents. Special attention is paid to fires transitioning from one phase to another.

- The principal mission of wildland fire management agencies is the cost effective and timely coordination of land management agency emergency response to wildland fire. As a partner in the National Response Plan and as interagency cooperators, we also provide support to non-wildland fire incidents. As directed by the President and/or Secretaries, we will meet the demands of non-wildland fire incidents. When wildland resources are insufficient to meet the demands of both non-fire and wildland fire incidents, consideration will be given to Presidential and Secretarial direction. Non-wildland fire incidents have included catastrophic weather events, support to shuttle recovery, APHIS-New Castle Disease, and 9-11 response (Refer to Appendix 5).
- All firefighting efforts and strategies must be coordinated with states, tribes, local government, and other key entities.
- Agency Administrators and Fire Program Managers should continuously evaluate restrictions on the use of various types of suppression resources and tactics on lands they manage.
- GMACs must develop “geographic strategies,” based on the current and anticipated fire situation. These strategies should focus on the entire scope of the wildland fire situation within the Geographic Area and not merely individual fires. GMAC projections must include potential to impact population centers, contingency plans and trigger points to enact them, critical resources required to mitigate the threat.
- Suppression strategies and tactics must be based on what the fire will allow us to do, not what we want to do. Allocating significant scarce resources to fires that will burn for the foreseeable future or have minimal probability of early containment should not be considered unless there is a direct threat to a community.

- To reduce unwanted ignitions and damage to communities, interagency prevention and education programs are encouraged and supported.
- It is imperative that a ready mobile reserve force be on hand and positioned, according to weather forecasts and other intelligence. A ready mobile reserve made up of critical resources for responding to national priorities will be maintained as necessary (Refer to Appendix 6).
- Emphasis will be placed on maintaining proficient and highly qualified agency and agency cooperator resources. Mobilization priorities will be adjusted as appropriate to ensure that experience goals are attained.
- The Department of the Interior (DOI) and the department of Agriculture have adopted the Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standards and Guide, referred to as the IFPM Standard. NWCG, PMS 310-1 qualifications are a key component of this standard. The IFPM standard will result in a greater need to coordinated and prioritized training assignments than in previous years. Management at all levels of the fire organization must assess the training and development needs of employees. Strategic training plans and priorities must be developed and implemented to ensure employee's training and developmental assignments are met. Partners at all levels are encouraged to proactively address this need in the interagency environment.
- Initial action is the primary mission for all tactical aviation assets. Information from predictive services and the Geographic Areas will be used to anticipate fire danger and fire occurrence. Resources will be pre-positioned to respond to these threats. Assignments will be validated daily and aircraft will be reallocated as necessary (Refer to Appendix 7).
- It is important that GMACs recognize the credible threat that domestic as well as international terrorists pose for intentionally ignited wildfires.

Actions

These actions are necessary to implement the national strategy.

- NMAC will coordinate with the GMACs for placement of critical or short supply resources, including Area Commands. Centralized management and control of critical resources may be implemented.
- Cost Containment Plans as identified in the Large Fire Cost Reduction Action Plan, March 2003, are still valid (Refer to Appendix 8).
- High priority tactical assignments should be made even if a resource is available for less than the usual 14-day rotation. For example, if a Type 1 crew is available only for five days, but could make a significant contribution on a fire during that time, the crew should be assigned to the incident. Resources should be used most effectively, keeping in mind national priorities.
- Innovative and creative ways of managing people and resources must be shared among Geographic Area Coordination Centers (GACCs). When something works well in one area, other areas need to know about it.
- For national mobilization, teams will configure to the national standard as described in the National Interagency Mobilization Guide. Teams ordered will be filled in the configuration requested, either short or long.
- Additional short teams may be organized to manage fires that do not require a long team.
- Form and utilize Type 3 organizations where appropriate.
- The primary role of Fire Use Management Teams is managing wildland fire use. However, they may be utilized for suppression assignments with appropriate justification.
- As the fire season develops, it will be important to monitor the effects of both short-term and cumulative fatigue. It is critical that fire personnel receive adequate rest and that supervisors watch for signs of fatigue and take action to mitigate it.
- Attention should be given to balance assignment opportunities for tactical resources as well as Incident Management Teams, on a national basis.
- The effectiveness of branching an incident should be evaluated as an alternative to assigning additional Incident Management Teams.

- Proactive Use of Predictive Services information in order to preposition resources prior to a defined need.

NMAC / GMAC Coordination

The NMAC will initiate conference calls with GMACs as the situation warrants.

The NMAC requires information from the GMACs to prioritize and allocate resources in accordance with the national strategy. GMACs will provide a description of the process they are utilizing in setting priorities. Additionally, they should provide an assessment of the current overall situation which includes an analysis of whether the situation should improve or deteriorate over the next seven days. Descriptions of risks associated with specific incidents that may pose a threat to communities or critical infrastructure is paramount.

When situations warrant, NMAC will require justification and information for assignment of Type 1 Incident Management Teams and Area Command Teams (Refer to Appendix 9).

Once an Area Command Team is assigned to a Geographic Area, the GMAC is responsible for providing management oversight in coordination with the agency administrator.

At National Preparedness Levels 4 and 5, list specific resources required to accomplish priority incident objectives and describe whether those needs can be met from within the Geographic Area or not (Refer to Appendix 10 and 11).

Updates are to be provided as the situation warrants.